

**REFUTING [THE IDEA] THAT SINCE WE APPLY DIFFERENT WORDS
SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT OBJECTS ARE ESTABLISHED**

In this outline, an opponent who is a follower of the Vaisheshika argues that since there are different verbal conventions that specify the quantity of an object, the quantity and the object must be of different natures. In response, our own system explains the nature of words (or verbal conventions); the difference between phenomena having different isolates and being of different natures; the difference between 'actual names' and 'imputed names', and so on.

Someone says: The quantity, etc. [of vases] that are of a separate nature than [those] vases exist because we can see that there are words for "one vase", "two vases", and so forth.

An opponent argues that the vases' quantity must exist as a separate entity, for we refer to vases with verbal conventions such as "one vase", "two vases", etc. Since we apply different labels to specify how many vases there are, there must be a separate entity that corresponds to this numerical specification.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*Words [and conceptual] consciousnesses have objects that are imputed by conceptual consciousnesses
That adhere to [excluding what is other than] that which is different from the entity
[that is not the object]*

[Response:] Just because we see there are different **words** and conceptual **consciousnesses**, it does not follow that they have substantially different objects. This is because, while 'a vase's [being] one' that is of a separate nature than a vase does not exist, [the words expressing "one vase" or the conceptual consciousnesses apprehending one vase] **have an object that is imputed by conceptual consciousnesses that adhere to excluding what is other than that which is different from the entity** that is not 'one vase'.

Our own system replies that although there are (a) different words to describe the numerous qualities or characteristics of a phenomenon and (b) different conceptual consciousnesses thinking about these attributes, this does not mean that the characteristics are of a different nature than the phenomenon.

It is important to understand that words and conceptual consciousnesses are similar in the way they operate with regard to their objects.

According to Buddhist philosophy, a 'word' refers to a verbal sound (not to a written word) that expresses something. An example is the verbal sound "vase". Its object is 'vase' and it engages or expresses 'vase' by way of merely excluding or negating anything that is *not vase*. The word "vase" is not able to reveal the vase fully; it does not speak of any of the various parts or characteristics of the vase.

A conceptual consciousness is a type of mind that conceptually apprehends or thinks of its object. An example is the conceptual consciousness apprehending (or thinking of) 'vase'. Like a word, it operates by way of exclusion, for it arrives at its object through negation. The conceptual consciousness apprehending 'vase' mentally separates its object from everything else, in that it merely negates *not vase*. Unlike a sense consciousness, it does not perceive its object fully with all the numerous parts and attributes of the object appearing to it.

Since words and conceptual consciousnesses both engage (that is, express or apprehend) their objects through exclusion, they are referred to as "eliminative

engagers” (Tib: *sel 'jug*).

Although a vase could never exist separately from its color, shape, subtle particles, impermanence and so forth, it is possible mentally (or verbally) to isolate the ‘vase’ without considering any of these attributes. The conceptual consciousness apprehending ‘vase’ isolates the vase by functionally negating all that is *not* vase. This is why the Buddhist scriptures refer to a phenomenon’s “isolate” (Tib: *ldog pa*) and to two things having “different isolates” (Tib: *ldog pa tha dad*).

Whatever is the *isolate* of a phenomenon is necessarily *one with* (i.e., identical with) the phenomenon. Hence, only ‘vase’ itself serves as the *isolate* of vase. Not even things that are synonymous with the vase such as ‘existent vase’, ‘impermanent vase’, or ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ are the *isolates* of the vase, for they do not appear to the conceptual consciousness apprehending ‘vase’.

This is why Buddhist masters distinguish between phenomena having *different isolates* and being of *different natures* (Tib: *ngo bo tha dad*) and between phenomena having *one isolate* (Tib: *ldog pa gcig*) and being of *one nature* (Tib: *ngo bo gcig*).

‘Vase’ and ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ have *different isolates* because they are not *identical*¹. However, they are of *one nature*, for they are equivalent and one cannot exist without the other.

Similarly, the attributes of the vase such as its color, shape, quantity, etc. have *different isolates* than the vase but they are of *one nature* with it. They are of *one nature* with the vase because they are parts of the vase without which the vase could not exist.

Having *one isolate* or *different isolates* is thus determined by the way phenomena are apprehended by conceptual consciousnesses, whereas being of *one nature* or of *different natures* is determined by the way they are apprehended by direct perceivers.

Since conceptual consciousnesses are *eliminative engagers*, the conceptual consciousness apprehending ‘vase’ does not explicitly apprehend the ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ and the conceptual consciousness apprehending the ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ does not explicitly apprehend ‘vase’. Although ‘vase’ and ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ are equivalent, they require different conceptual consciousnesses in order to both (a) appear to and (b) be apprehended by a conceptual consciousness; they are explicitly apprehended by different conceptual consciousnesses in isolation from each other, which is why they have *different isolates*.

On the other hand, direct perceivers (such as correct sense consciousnesses) are *collective engagers* (Tib: *sgrub 'jug*), for they apprehend their objects fully. An eye consciousness apprehending a vase is an example of a direct perceiver. It apprehends the vase fully, for not only does the vase appear, numerous other phenomena that are of one nature with the vase such as ‘opposite-from-not-vase’, ‘one vase’, ‘the vase’s impermanence’, its color, shape, etc. also appear to the eye consciousness (without the awareness necessarily cognizing all of these phenomena).

Being of *one nature* or not with the vase is determined by a direct perceiver, because in the case of the eye consciousness apprehending the vase, ‘impermanent vase’, ‘one vase’, ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ the vase’s color, shape, etc. appear to the eye consciousness as inseparable from the vase.

¹ Please note that having *one isolate* is synonymous with being *identical* or *one*. For instance, ‘vase’ and ‘vase’ have *one isolate* and ‘vase’ is thus *identical* or *one* with ‘vase’. Having *one isolate* basically means to have the same meaning and the same name.

Having *different isolates* is synonymous with being *different*. ‘Opposite-from-not-vase’, for example, is *different* from ‘vase’ since ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ and ‘vase’ have *different isolates*. Yet this does not contradict the fact that ‘vase’ and ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ are *equivalent* (since whatever is a ‘vase’, is necessarily the ‘opposite-from-not-vase’; whatever is the ‘opposite-from-not-vase’ is necessarily a ‘vase’; wherever there is a ‘vase’, there is necessarily the ‘opposite-from-not-vase’; and wherever there is the ‘opposite-from-not-vase’, there is necessarily a ‘vase’).

Phenomena that are of *different natures*, on the other hand, appear differently to direct perceivers. For example, a vase and a table (which are of *different natures*) appear as separate entities² to an eye consciousness.

Hence, it is in dependence on that mode of appearance that we can differentiate between phenomena that are of *one nature* and those that are of *different natures*.

The Vaisheshikas do not distinguish between phenomena that have *different isolates* and phenomena that are of *different natures*. According to them, whatever is *different* from another phenomenon must be of a *different nature* than that phenomenon. So, they argue that vases and their quantity must be of *different natures* since the words we use to refer only to 'vases' are different from the words we use to refer to a specific number of vases, namely 'one vase', 'two vases', and so forth.

Our own system replies that the attributes of phenomena such as their quantity, etc. do not exist as substantially different entities even if we label or think of them in different ways. 'One vase' is not of a *different nature* than 'vase'. It is merely *different* from 'vase' since the two have *different isolates*. This is because, as explained above, the conceptual consciousness thinking of or imputing 'vase' operates by way of excluding everything that is *not* 'vase', while the conceptual consciousness thinking of or imputing 'one vase' excludes everything that is *not* 'one vase'.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*For example, like the quality [blue,] etc., and
Having disintegrated or having not yet been generated. [94]*

For example, although there is no second [separate] quality that is based on **the quality** blue, **etc.** we can see that [there is the convention] "one blue [thing]"; or, although there is no quality that is of a separate nature from a 'vase **having disintegrated**' or '[a vase] **having not yet been generated**', we see that there are conventions [for these objects] such as "one", "two", etc.

When we describe a blue object, for instance, we may use the verbal convention "*one blue thing*"; when we speak of two vases that were destroyed yesterday we may use the verbal convention, "*two destroyed vases*" or when we talk about three vases that will be newly created tomorrow, we may say "*three vases that have not yet been generated*", and so forth. These verbal conventions indicate that qualities such as numerical specifications are based on other qualities such as colors, *having existed in the past or coming into existence in the future*. Yet this does not mean these numeric qualities are of a different nature than the qualities on which they are based.

Please note that there are two types of conventions (Tib: *tha snyed*): (1) verbal conventions (Tib: *sgra'i tha snyed*) and (2) mental conventions (Tib: *blo'i tha snyed*). A verbal convention for a vase, for instance, is the label for vase, such as the Tibetan word "bumpa" or the English word "vase". An example of a mental convention for about a vase is the conceptual consciousness thinking, "This is a vase."

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

In case [someone says:] We assert that [applying the convention of numbers to a past or future object] here is an imputed [name].

In case someone says: **We assert that** applying the convention of numbers **here** to a past or future [object] **is an imputed** name.

² According to some descriptions, a vase and its color, for instance, appear inseparable to an eye consciousness, much like the way a mixture of milk and water appears, while a vase and a table appear to an eye consciousness as separate entities the way the moon and a star appear.

As mentioned before, the Vaisheshikas hold that a quality cannot be based on another quality. According to them, two qualities lack a separate part-possessor that is of a different nature than the two qualities; therefore, the two qualities must be of one nature.

Since *having existed in the past* and *existing in the future* are both qualities, the Vaisheshika contend that it is not possible for numerically specific qualities such as one, two, three, etc. to be based on qualities such as *having existed in the past* or *existing in the future*.

Based on this view, a Vaisheshika opponent argues that verbal conventions such as “two disintegrating vases” and “three vases that have not yet been generated” are respectively just the ‘imputed names’ of *two vases that have disintegrated* and *three vases that will be generated*. Since the opponent asserts that numerical qualities that are based on other qualities do not exist, he is contending that the labels that describe them are not their ‘actual names’.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*Owing to [some] reason, you accept that.
Why do you not assert that
The reason [applies] to all entities? [95]*

[Response:] **Why do you not assert that the reason for imputing** the conventions [as being the imputed names] **of these** [past and future objects applies] **to all entities?** It follows that it is reasonable to assert this, because (a) **owing to the reason** that there is no characteristic that is of a separate nature, **you accept that** the names of numbers, etc. are the ‘imputed names’ of past and future [objects], and (b) [our own system has established that] all entities are the same in that their numbers, etc. are not of a separate nature.

In response, our own system argues that the opponent’s reason for asserting that the numerical verbal conventions applied to past or future objects are their ‘imputed names’ can be applied to the labels of all entities. In particular, it can be applied to labels that describe numerical or other qualities of their referent objects. In other words, if the opponent holds that the words “two past objects” are the ‘imputed name’ of *two past objects* and the label “three future objects” is the ‘imputed name’ of *three future objects*, then the verbal conventions or labels of all other phenomena must be their ‘imputed names’.

According to the opponent, the words “two past objects” are the ‘imputed name’ of *two past objects* since the numerical quality – *two* – is not of a different nature than the quality of being a *past object*. Likewise, “three future objects” is the ‘imputed name’ of *three future objects* because the numerical quality – *three* – is not of a different nature than the quality of being a *future object*.

Our own system, however, had previously established that there is no numerical specification or any other quality that is of a different nature than the phenomenon that serves as the basis of that quality. For instance, in the case of *one vase* or *three tables*, there is no amount or number that can be found to be existing substantially separately from the vase or the tables. ‘*One*’ does not exist as something of a different nature than *one vase* and ‘*three*’ does not exist as being of a different nature than *three tables*.

Our own system argues, therefore, that if the label “two past objects” were the imputed name of *two past objects*, since ‘two’ and those past objects are not of different natures, it would follow that the label “one vase” is the imputed name of *one vase*, and the label “three tables” is the imputed name of *three tables*, as the vase and the tables are not of a

different nature than their numerical specifications. This would mean that one vase and three tables do not have an actual name.

Likewise, the words “white vase” would not be the actual name of a white vase and the words “wooden table” would not be the actual name of a wooden table, because the vase’s white color is of one nature with the vase and the wooden material of the table is of one nature with the table. Therefore, regarding any phenomena and their qualities, none of the verbal conventions would be their actual names – which would be absurd.

Please note that names can be divided into (1) actual names (tib: *dnegos ming*) and (2) imputed names (Tib: *btags ming*). An actual name refers to a sound that is applied to a phenomenon as its label and whose main referent object is one with that phenomenon.

For instance, the actual name of a vase is the label “vase”, because the word “vase” is applied to a vase as its label and its main referent object, vase, is one with vase.

Similarly, the actual name of a table is the label “a table”, the actual name of white chairs is the label “white chairs”, and so forth.

However, the words “existent table” are not the actual name of a table because, although an existent table and a table are equivalent, they are neither one nor identical.

Similarly, the name “John Miller” is not the actual name of a person who, for instance, is our neighbor and whose full name is John Miller, for our neighbor whose name is John Miller is not one with John Miller.

An imputed name refers to: a sound that is applied to an entity as its label, and which fulfills the three characteristics of an imputed name.

The three characteristics of an imputed name are: (a) there is a reason for imputing the name, (b) there is a purpose for imputing the name and (c) there is a valid counter-argument to the assertion that the phenomenon to which the imputed name is applied is the referent object of that name.

Imputed names can be categorized into (1) imputed names that are given to an object on account of similarity and (2) imputed names that are given to an object on account of a relationship.

An example of the first type is the name “lion”, given to a person in a powerful position whose facial features resemble a lion’s face, if the aim is to indicate, for instance, that the person is powerful. The label “lion” is *an imputed name that is given to an object on account of similarity*, because the person to whom the name is given shares some features with a lion.

It fulfills the three characteristics of imputed names because (a) the label is applied by reason of similarity to a lion, (b) it is applied for the purpose of indicating that the person thus labelled is powerful and (c) there is a valid counter-argument damaging the assumption that the powerful person is the label’s main referent object, a lion. The counter-argument is that a powerful person is not an animal and thus not a lion.

The second type of imputed names can be subdivided into: (1) imputed names that are given on account of being related as one entity and (2) imputed names that are given on account of being related as cause and effect.

An example of the first type is the label “tablecloth”, applied to *the corner* of a tablecloth. Such a label may be applied when someone says that the tablecloth was burnt when only a corner of it was burned and if his purpose in saying so is to indicate, for instance, that burning a corner has ruined the entire tablecloth. The label is *an imputed name that is given on account of being related as one entity* because the corner of a tablecloth is a part of the cloth and thus of the same nature as the cloth.

As before, the verbal convention “tablecloth” fulfills the three characteristics of an imputed name because (a) the label is applied by reason of the corner of the tablecloth and the tablecloth being of one nature, (b) it is applied with the purpose of indicating

that burning a corner has damaged the entire cloth, and (c) there is a valid counter-argument to the assumption that the corner of a tablecloth is that imputed name's referent object, the tablecloth, since there is nothing that is both a part of a tablecloth and the tablecloth itself.

The second subdivision of *imputed names that are given to an object on account of a relationship* (i.e., *being related as cause and effect*) can further be categorized into: (1) applying the name of a cause to its effect and (2) applying the name of an effect to its cause.

An example of the first type is the label "sun" applied to the rays of the sun when someone wants to stress that a particular room is very sunny and therefore says that it gets a lot of sun. Another example is applying the word "karma" to a karmic result when describing a particular experience as a person's karma with the aim of emphasizing the correlation between a volitional act and the resultant experience.

The two examples fulfill the three characteristics of an imputed name because (a) the label "sun" is designated to the rays of the sun and the label "karma" to a karmic experience by reason of the fact that the sun is the cause of the rays of the sun and karma is the cause of karmic experience; (b) the purpose is to stress that a particular room is very sunny and to emphasize the correlation between a volitional act and its resultant experience; and (c) the counter-argument is that a cause and its result are contradictory and thus the sun is not its rays and a karmic act is not its resultant experience.

An example of *applying the name of an effect to its cause* is the label "firewood" applied to an unseasoned or freshly-cut piece of wood when someone wants to point out that it is to be dried and used for fuel. The word fulfills the three characteristics of an imputed name because (a) the label is applied by reason of the fact that seasoned or dry firewood is the result of properly treated unseasoned wood; (b) the purpose is to indicate that it is intended to be dried and used for fuel in the future; and (c) the counter-argument is that in its present condition, it is too wet to be burned and used as firewood.

Another example of *applying the name of an effect to its cause* is the use of the word "existence" to describe the tenth of the twelve links of dependent arising³. It fulfills the three characteristics of an imputed name because (a) the word is applied to the *existence* of a new life, as the result of the tenth link of *existence*; (b) the purpose is to indicate that a fully actualized karmic seed of the present lifetime gives rise to a future lifetime; and (c) the counter-argument is that the fully actualized karmic seed exists in the present and not in the future lifetime.

Although a label is necessarily either an actual or an imputed name, it is not necessarily the actual or imputed name of a particular phenomenon. For instance, the verbal convention "existent table" that is applied to a *table* is neither the actual nor the imputed name of a *table*. It is not its actual name because even though an *existent table* is equivalent to a table, it is not one with it and thus not the isolate of a *table*. Nor is it

³ The *tenth link, existence* (Tib: *srid pa*) refers to a fully activated karmic seed and occurs during the last moment of the present lifetime. That seed was left on the mental continuum as a result of the *first link, ignorance* (Tib: *ma rig pa*) and the *second link, formative action* (Tib: *'du byed kyi las*) from a previous life. The latter refers to a karmic or volitional act of body, speech or mind that was induced by the *first link, ignorance*. It has the potential to determine a future rebirth and leaves a karmic seed or potency on the mind of the person who performed the action. The karmic seed lies dormant until near the end of the present lifetime when craving (e.g. craving to stay alive) arises in the person's mental continuum owing to his impending death. When the craving grows stronger it turns into grasping. If craving and grasping serve to potentialize the karmic seed that was left in a previous life by the *second link, compositional action*, they are described as the *eighth link, craving*, and the *ninth link, grasping*. Once craving and grasping have potentialized the karmic seed it becomes fully activated (like a fully germinated barley seed, for instance), ready to cause the person's rebirth. Hence, the *tenth link, existence*, is the fully potentialized or activated karmic seed that inevitably produces the next lifetime. For a detailed description of the twelve links, please see H.H. the Dalai Lama's *Meaning of Life* [Wisdom Publications: 2005] and Geshe Sonam Rinchen and Ruth Sonam's *How Karma Works* [Snow Lion: New York, 2006].

the imputed name of a *table* since it does not fulfil the third characteristic of such a name. There is *no* valid *counter*-argument to the assertion that a *table* is the referent object of the words “existent table”, for a table *is* an existent table.

From this explanation it becomes clear that whatever exists must necessarily have an actual name, which is why it would be absurd to hold – as the opponent’s assertion seems to suggest – that the verbal convention or label for an entity is necessarily its imputed name.

[Dharmakirti says in the **Pramanavarttika**:]

*In case [someone says:] Imputed [names] are not [applied] to all.
It is said that [having] a different characteristic is principal.*

In case someone says: **Imputed** [names] **are not** applied **to all** [entities], because otherwise it would follow that ‘actual names’ are impossible. Therefore, **it is said that** [a label the referent object of which] has a substantially **different characteristic** is a **principal** [name] and thus an actual name. A name applied to [a referent object that] does not have [such a characteristic] is an imputed name.

The opponent agrees with our own system in as far as it would be absurd if whatever is the verbal convention or label of an entity were necessarily that phenomenon’s imputed name. This would mean that there would be no phenomenon that had an actual name. The Vaisheshika opponent contends that not all verbal conventions or labels are imputed names, because according to them, the label of an entity that has a substantially different quality or characteristic is an actual name, while the label of an entity that does not have such a quality is an imputed name.

The Vaisheshikas contend that since ‘one’ is a quality that is of a different nature than a single vase the label “one vase” is the vase’s actual name. However, the Vaisheshikas hold that the verbal convention “one blue object” is merely the imputed and not the actual name of a single blue phenomenon. This is because (according to them) the numerical specification ‘one’ is applied to the quality blue, and since ‘one’ and ‘blue’ are both qualities, they are of one nature. Hence, blue is the referent object of the label “one blue object” and being a quality itself, it does not have a quality that is of a different nature than itself which is why the verbal convention “one blue object” is its imputed name.

[Dharmakirti says in the **Pramanavarttika**:]

What is the reason for [saying that]?...

[Response:] **What is the reason for** saying that the name applied [to a referent object that] has a characteristic which is of a separate nature is an actual name and a name [applied to a referent object that] does not have such [a characteristic] is an imputed name? It follows that it is not tenable because the Vaisheshikas merely ascribe such without any reason.

Our own system replies that there is no logical reason why the Vaisheshikas define an actual and an imputed name based on whether the referent object of a verbal convention has a substantially different characteristic or not.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. How does a word express its referent object?
2. How does a conceptual consciousness apprehend its object?

3. What do words and conceptual consciousnesses have in common?
4. What is a phenomenon's isolate?
5. What does it mean to have different isolates?
6. What is a collective engager?
7. Which type of awarenesses determines whether two phenomena are different isolates and which type determines whether they are of different natures?
8. What are the two types of convention?
9. Why do the Vaisheshikas assert that a quality is not based on another quality?
10. What is the difference between an actual name and an imputed name?
11. What are the different categories of imputed names?
12. Is the word "pen" the actual or imputed name of an *impermanent pen*?
13. According to the Vaisheshikas, what is the difference between an actual name and an imputed name?

IF THOSE ARE NOT ESTABLISHED, IT FOLLOWS THAT DIFFERENT WORDS ARE POINTLESS

[This is divided into:]

- (1) Dispelling the absurdity that [applying] different words is pointless
- (2) Dispelling the absurdity that the sixth [genitive] case is not tenable

DISPELLING THE ABSURDITY THAT APPLYING DIFFERENT WORDS IS POINTLESS

Under this heading, our own system explains that even if the referent objects of a verbal convention are of the same nature, they do not necessarily have the same meaning.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

.....*It is pointless [to apply]
Different [words when the referent objects] are not different [substantial entities] [96]*

Someone says: **It is pointless** to apply **different** words when the objects they express **are not different** substantial entities, because even if [different words] are applied, they indicate objects that have the same meaning.

According to Vaisheshika philosophy, if two objects are of one nature, they cannot be different. The Vaisheshikas contend that if 'one' and 'vase', for instance, were of one nature, they would be necessarily indistinguishable or identical, and although the word "one" and the word "vase" would be different, the two words would have the same referent objects.

Therefore, a Vaisheshika opponent argues that the words "one vase" indicate objects that have the same meaning since there would be no difference between saying "one" and "vase". The word "vase" would merely repeat the meaning of the word "one" and would add nothing to what we already know after we heard the word "one".

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

Although there is no reason [for positing numbers] that are of a separate nature [than

a white object]
[The words associated with] numbers, etc. [that express one] white [object,] etc. and
The words [that express the white thing] which possesses [the number] do not
Indicate objects that have the same meaning.

[Response:] If there are different words the expressed objects of which are not of a separate nature, it follows that they do not necessarily indicate objects that have the same meaning. This is because, although **there is no reason** for [positing] numbers **that are of a separate nature** than a white [object], the words associated with **numbers, etc.** that express “one **white** [object]” or “two white [objects]” and **the words** that express the white [object itself] **which possesses** those numbers **do not indicate objects that have the same meaning.**

Our own system disagrees, arguing that even if the referent objects of a verbal convention are of the same substantial entity they may have a different meaning.

Khedrup Je explains ‘words indicating objects that have the same meaning’ (Tib: *sgra rnam grangs pa*) in his *Ocean of Reasoning, a Great Commentary on the Pramanavarttika* (Tib: *tshad ma rnam 'grel tikchen rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*):

Someone contends: “[The Buddha] saying ‘Well said! Well said!’ twice in the Heart Sutra [is an example of] words the objects of which have the same meaning.” [Our own system replies that] this is not tenable because there is a great purpose for [the Buddha] uttering those words twice. Even if someone were to say ‘Well said! Well said!’ without any purpose, these would not be words indicating objects that have the same meaning but repetitive words. It is understood to be inane not to differentiate between repetitive words and words the objects of which have the same meaning. Accordingly, words the objects of which have the same meaning are terms the objects of which have the same meaning and thus it is said that [the labels] “moon”, “rabbit-possessor” and “the-one-who-has-cool-rays” are words indicating objects that have the same meaning because they are different terms that are alike in that through [hearing them] one is able to exclusively understand [that they are referring to] the moon.

In this quote Khedrup Je distinguishes between *repetitive words* (Tib: *sgra zlos pa*) and *words the objects of which have the same meaning*. *Repetitive words* refer to identical labels that have the same referent object and are spoken without any special purpose. An example is the words “vase, vase”, uttered without any particular reason.

Words the objects of which have the same meaning are *different* labels (a) the referent objects of which are equivalent and (b) which do not convey different meanings. As an example, Khedrup cites three Tibetan terms for the moon: *dawa* (Tib: *zla ba*, Skt: *chandra*), *ribong-cen* (Tib: *ri bong can*, Skt: *shashank*), and *sil-zer-cen* (Tib: *bsil zer can*, Skt: *himamsu*).

Dawa can be simply translated as moon. *Ribong-cen* literally means ‘that which has a rabbit’ or ‘rabbit-possessor’. This term is rooted in Asian folklore according to which the moon is inhabited by a rabbit, based on interpretations that identify the markings on the moon as the image of a rabbit. The third word for moon, *sil-zer-cen* literally translates as ‘the-one-who-has-cool-rays’. This term presumably originated in India where particularly during the hot pre-monsoon season the rays of the moon at night are considered to have cooling properties, providing relief from the scorching rays of the sun.

Although those three words differ etymologically from each other, to a Tibetan speaker they refer equally to the moon without conveying any further meaning. In contrast, the terms “impermanent” and “product” do not indicate objects that have the same meaning, for they convey different meanings. Although impermanent and product are equivalent (and therefore of one nature) the word “impermanent” indicates that something changes moment by moment while “product” indicates that it was produced by its own causes and conditions.

Therefore, our own system asserts that two different terms the referent objects of which are of one nature do not necessarily express objects that have the same meaning (although they can do⁴).

For instance, the referent objects of the three words “one white object” are of one nature since ‘one’ and ‘a white object’ are inseparably linked. Yet although they are of one nature this does not mean that the two adjectives in the verbal convention have the same meaning and that the word “white” does not add anything to what we already know after we heard the word “one”.

The same is true for the referent objects of the words “two white objects”. Although ‘two’ and ‘two white objects’ are one substantial entity, they have different meanings.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

In case [someone says:] That [white object] also [has a quality of being ‘one’] which is of a separate nature. [97]

In case someone says: **That** white [object] **also** possesses [a characteristic of being] ‘one’ **which is of a separate nature**.

An opponent who is a follower of the Vaisheshika may argue that in the case of ‘one white object’, the numerical quality ‘one’ is based on the quality ‘white’ and is thus of a different nature than ‘white’.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

There would be no difference between a substance [and] a quality.

[Response:] It **would** follow that **there** is **no difference between a substance and a quality**, because a second quality that is a different substantial entity would be based on a [first] quality.

In response, our own system argues that this assertion contradicts Vaisheshika philosophy. As mentioned before, the Vaisheshikas hold that a white object cannot possess a substantially separate quality of ‘being one’, for a quality cannot be based on another quality.

If they *were* to base ‘being one’ on ‘being white’, then they would be treating ‘white’ as a substance since (according to them) a quality must be based on a substance. Yet this would undermine the distinction between substances and qualities that the Vaisheshikas strived to establish, because ‘white’ would be both a substance and a quality. It would be a substance because the quality of ‘being one’ would be based on it, and it would be a quality because it is a color and colors are qualities.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*Although [some phenomena] are not of a separate nature
They have different categories of isolates;
Like the words [stating that] an action is not a substance. [98]*

It follows that the causes which give rise to different words and conceptual consciousnesses do not inevitably have to be different substantial entities, for **although** [some phenomena] **are not of a separate nature**, it is simply owing to their **different categories of isolates** that different words can be applied [to them]. For instance, although ‘not being a substance’ does not exist as a characteristic that is a different

⁴ The words “moon” and “rabbit-possessor” are different words the referent objects of which are of one nature since their referent objects – moon and rabbit-possessor – are equivalent.

substantial entity with regard to an activity, and ‘not being an activity’ does not exist as a characteristic that is a different substantial entity with regard to a substance [they are expressed with] **the words**, “a substance is not an action,” and “**an action is not a substance**”.

In brief, even if different phenomena serve as the causes or bases of different words and different conceptual consciousnesses, this does not mean that they are of different natures.

For instance, a table serves as the basis of the label “table” and the conceptual consciousness apprehending a table, while a table’s color serves as the basis of the label “color of a table” and the conceptual consciousness apprehending that color. Yet although the table and its color give rise to different conceptual awarenesses and different verbal conventions – which accounts for the fact that the table and its color have different isolates – the table and its color are nonetheless one substantial entity.

As mentioned before, despite a table being inseparably linked to its attributes (its color, shape, impermanence, and so forth) it is possible conceptually or verbally to isolate the table from that which is part of it through conceptually apprehending or verbally expressing *only* the table. Similarly, it is possible to isolate one of the table’s attributes through conceptually apprehending or verbally expressing only that attribute and not that which it is based on, the table. This means that every phenomenon (the table, each of its attributes, and so on) has its own isolate as it can be conceptually or verbally isolated from everything else (even from that which is of one nature with it).

The Vaisheshikas, for instance, assert that whatever exists pertains to one of the six categories: (1) substance, (2) quality, (3) activity, (4) generality, (5) particularity, and (6) inherence, and that these six categories are mutually exclusive. This means that a substance is not an activity and an activity is not a substance. In view of this, ‘not being a substance’ is a characteristic of an activity, while ‘not being an activity’ is a characteristic of a substance, which is why ‘not being a substance’ is of one nature with an activity and ‘not being an activity’ is of one nature with a substance. Yet although ‘not being an activity’ and a substance are inseparably linked they are described with different verbal conventions when stating, for instance, “a substance is not an activity” (with the word “substance” being different from the words “not an activity”). The same is true for ‘not being a substance’ and an activity which are expressed with different words when saying “an activity is not a substance”.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What are *words indicating objects that have the same meaning*?
2. What is the difference between *repetitive words* and *words indicating objects that have the same meaning*?
3. Why are the words “moon” and “rabbit-possessor” words the objects of which have the same meaning, while “impermanent” and “product” are not?
4. Do numbers exist as separate entities from the objects they numerically specify?
5. How does our own system arrive at the logical absurdity that according to the Vaisheshikas, there would be no difference between a substance and a quality?
6. Why is ‘not being a substance’ a characteristic of an activity?

DISPELLING THE ABSURDITY THAT THE SIXTH [GENITIVE] CASE IS NOT TENABLE

[This is divided into:]

The difference between *words expressing a predicate* and *words expressing a subject*

The difference between *words expressing a type* and *words expressing a collection*

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORDS EXPRESSING A PREDICATE AND WORDS EXPRESSING A SUBJECT

Here Dharmakirti explains that even if two phenomena are of one nature they can be expressed differently depending on whether they are connected by the sixth genitive case⁵ or not⁶.

Someone says: Well, then, it is not tenable [to use] the expression. “the number of vases,” because there is no number that is of a separate nature.

A follower of the Vaisheshika argues that, if a quality such as a numerical specification and the phenomenon it is based on are not different substantial entities, it does not make sense to express them using the genitive. According to the Vaisheshikas, the fact that we can talk of “the number of vases”, “the color of a table”, “the impermanence of sound”, and so forth indicates that numbers, colors, impermanence, etc. must be of a separate nature than the phenomena they qualify.

Our own system refutes this in the following three sections:

1. The purpose of applying the sixth genitive case
2. Demonstrating that *words expressing a predicate* exclude other characteristics
3. Demonstrating that *words expressing a subject* do not exclude other characteristics

The purpose of applying the sixth [genitive] case:

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*Words expressing an entity
Which indicate that a number, etc. [and]
that which possesses that [number] are different,
Bring forth [the understanding of] a distinction. [99]*

Regarding the subject, **words expressing an entity** – that is, a predicate – **which indicate that a number, etc.** and a vase **that possesses that [number] are different**, they have a purpose, because they are applied in order to **bring forth** the understanding of **a distinction** between the number of the vase and the **other predicates** of the vase.

According to our own system, verbal conventions expressing two referent objects that are linked with the genitive are called *words expressing an entity* or *words expressing a predicate*. Examples include the words “the number of vases”, “the impermanence of

⁵ Tibetan grammar is based on Sanskrit grammar and thus both Sanskrit and Tibetan have eight cases. The eight cases are: (1) nominative, (2) accusative, (3) instrumental, (4) dative, (5) ablative, (6) genitive, (7) locative, and (8) vocative.

⁶ As explained below, an example of two phenomena of one nature that are expressed with the genitive is the words “the impermanence of sound”; an example of two phenomena of one nature that are expressed without the genitive is the words “sound is impermanent”.

sound”, and so on. The relationship between their referent objects is that one is the *predicate* and the other the *subject*. The *predicate* (Tib: *chos*) refers to a quality or characteristic of the subject, while the *subject* (Tib: *chos can*) is the phenomenon which possesses the quality.

Taking the words “the impermanence of sound” as an example: in general, impermanence is the *predicate* of sound while sound is the *subject*, for impermanence is a quality or characteristic of sound. However, when impermanence and sound are verbally expressed with the genitive, sound presents itself as the *predicate* and impermanence as the *subject*. This will be explained in the next section.

Moreover, although impermanence and sound are of one nature (sound’s impermanence being inseparably linked to sound) they are different phenomena. The latter is implied by the genitive, which grammatically links the *predicate* and the *subject* yet indicates that sound and its impermanence are distinct phenomena⁷. The words “the impermanence of sound” further serve to set apart sound’s impermanence from its other qualities (e.g., sound’s existence, its definition, and so forth).

According to Khedrup Je, the words “the number of vases” also serve the purpose of setting apart the number of vases from the quantity of other phenomena, such as the number of tables, the number of houses, and so on.

Similarly, the words “the impermanence of sound” set apart sound’s impermanence from the impermanence of other things, such as the impermanence of a vase, the impermanence of a table, etc.

Khedrup Je says this in his ***Ocean of Reasoning, a Great Commentary on the Pramanavarttika*** (Tib: *tshad ma rnam ‘grel tik chen rigs pa’i rgya tsho*):

The words “the number of vases” express an entity or predicate and indicate that the number etc. and the vase etc. which possess those [characteristics] are different. [These words] bring forth the understanding of a distinction between the number of vases and other numbers such as the number of pillars.

In his ***Ornament of the Seven Commentaries, a Treatise on Pramana, Clearing the Darkness of the Mind*** (Tib: *tshad ma’i bstan bcos sde bdun gyi yid kyi mun sel*) Khedrup Je says:

The head [which is the referent object of the words] “the head of the god Rahu” brings forth the understanding of a distinction between the head of a human and a god.

Please note that words that express two referent objects which are of one nature can be classified into two types:

- (a) Words expressing a predicate
- (b) Words expressing a subject

These two are explained in the following two sections:

Demonstrating that words expressing a predicate exclude other characteristics:

[Dharmakirti says in the ***Pramanavarttika***:]

*For those wishing to know only about [the connecting of fingers]
[The words] do not suggest all the other [characteristics].
For some [the words] “the conjunction of fingers”*

⁷ The first chapter of the ***Pramanavarttika*** also briefly discusses the topic of words expressing a predicate and words expressing a subject. In that chapter, Gyaltsab Je mentions in his ***Clarifying the Path to Liberation*** that when words expressing a predicate appear to the conceptual consciousness of the person who hears those words, their referent objects appear to that conceptual consciousness as being of a different nature. For instance, although the words “the impermanence of sound” only indicate that impermanence and sound are *different*, to the conceptual consciousness of the person hearing those words impermanence and sound not only appear to be different, they mistakenly appear to be of different natures.

describe [the fingers] as phenomena that are different from [the conjunction of the fingers]. [100]

Regarding the subject, the words expressing, “**the conjunction of fingers, ”for some** there is a purpose in that [the words] **describe** the fingers **as phenomena that are different from** the conjunction of the fingers. This is because **for those wishing to know only** about the connecting of fingers – in order to know [this] – [the words “the conjunction of the fingers”] only express the [connecting of fingers]; they **do not suggest** as an object of awareness the isolates of **all the other** [characteristics of the fingers].

Dharmakirti here cites another example of *words expressing a predicate*: the words “the conjunction of fingers”. The conjunction of fingers refers to someone’s fingers existing in a state of being conjoined or connected by the palm of the hand and is thus a quality or characteristic of those fingers. The genitive here indicates that the fingers and their conjunction are different phenomena. The purpose for this is to distinguish the fingers’ conjunction from all the other qualities of the fingers (such as their impermanence, their shape, and so forth).

Therefore, *words expressing a predicate* are also referred to as *words excluding other characteristics* (Tib: *khyad par gzhan mi spong gis gra*). These characteristics are excluded by the conceptual consciousness that arises in the continuum of the person hearing the words.

For instance, in the case of a person who is interested in knowing merely about the linking of the fingers, when he hears the words “the conjunction of the fingers”, the conjunction will present itself to the conceptual mind in such a way that it excludes all other qualities of the fingers.

In other words, when the person hears the words “the conjunction of the fingers”, a conceptual consciousness arises in his mental continuum, which apprehends the conjunction of the fingers and at the same time excludes the fingers’ other qualities such as their existence, their impermanence, and so forth, (thereby setting apart the fingers’ conjunction from the fingers’ other qualities). The conceptual consciousness excludes these qualities by way of the fingers appearing to the conceptual consciousness as serving only as the basis of their conjunction, and not of any other characteristics.

Similarly, with regard to the words “the impermanence of sound”: in the case of a person who is interested in understanding only the impermanent nature of sound, when he hears the statement “the impermanence of sound”, a conceptual consciousness arises in his mental continuum and apprehends the referent object of those words⁸ while excluding all the other qualities of sound.

⁸ It is important to note that in the mental continuum of a person who hears the words “the impermanence of sound”, there arises a conceptual consciousness which apprehends the referent object of these words but does not necessarily apprehend the impermanence of sound and thus the subtlest level of sound’s impermanence.

Impermanence refers to the subtle changes in a phenomenon that take place from moment to moment and are not obvious to our sense consciousnesses nor to our ordinary mental awarenesses. This is why impermanence is a *slightly hidden phenomenon*, initially understood only in reliance on correct reasoning and analysis. Hence, when hearing the words “the impermanence of sound”, people may have only a rough idea of what impermanence refers to and their conceptual consciousness apprehends only that which corresponds to that idea. This is different to, for instance, the conjunction of fingers, since a conjunction is a manifest or obvious phenomenon which an ordinary person (who has learned the meaning of “conjunction”) easily understands without having to rely on reasoning and analysis. So, the conceptual consciousness of a person who hears the words “the conjunction of fingers” apprehends that conjunction, while the conceptual consciousness of someone who hears the words “the impermanence of sound” apprehends the *referent object of those words*, i.e., whatever the impermanence of sound may mean to that person.

This is because to the conceptual consciousness, sound appears to be serving only as the basis of its impermanence and not as the basis of other characteristics⁹.

The first Dalai Lama Gyalwa Gedun Drup says in his *Ornament for Pramana* (Tib: *tshad ma rigs rgyan*):

Regarding the subject, the words “the impermanence of sound”, they express a predicate since they are words excluding characteristics. This is because they are a statement bringing forth the understanding that sound possesses impermanence. It does so by way of sound appearing to the conceptual consciousness [of the person listening to those words] as not suitable to be the basis of anything other than impermanence – such as [a basis] of ‘being a product’, etc.

Another reason for describing the words “the conjunction of fingers” as *words excluding other characteristics* is that they exclude the characteristic of ‘a conjunction’ based on other phenomena. Hence, when a person hears the words “the conjunction of fingers”, his conceptual consciousness apprehends the fingers’ conjunction while excluding the conjunction of other phenomena such as the conjunction of toes, the conjunction of other body parts, and so forth (thereby setting the fingers’ conjunction apart from the conjunction of other phenomena). To that conceptual mind, the fingers’ conjunction appears to relate only to the fingers.

Similarly, when someone hears the words “the impermanence of sound”, his conceptual consciousness apprehends the words’ referent object and excludes the impermanence of other things such as the impermanence of a vase, the impermanence of a table, and so forth, because to that conceptual mind, sound’s impermanence appears to relate only to sound¹⁰.

There are thus two reasons for calling words such as “the impermanence of sound” *words excluding characteristics*: (1) the first reason is that they exclude other characteristics of sound, and (2) the second reason is that they indicate that sound’s impermanence does not serve as a characteristic of phenomena other than sound.

The reason for calling the statement “the impermanence of sound” *words expressing a predicate* is: as mentioned before, in general, impermanence is a *predicate* or characteristic of sound and sound is the *subject* or basis of its impermanence. However, when impermanence and sound are verbally expressed with the genitive, sound appears to be the *predicate* while impermanence appears to be the *subject*.

According to Khedrup Je’s explanation in his *Ornament of the Seven Commentaries, a Treatise on Pramana, Clearing the Darkness of the Mind*: for instance, when some people hear another person speak of “impermanence”, they may wonder on what the phenomenon which the other person is discussing is based. When they are told the person is talking of “the impermanence of sound”, impermanence appears to their conceptual consciousness as the *subject* (or basis of sound) while sound appears as the *predicate* (or characteristic of impermanence). The reason is that a *predicate* specifies or provides information about the phenomenon to which it is connected. In the case of the statement “the impermanence of sound”, sound specifies impermanence since it clearly indicates *which* impermanence the other person is talking about.

⁹ Please note that to the conceptual consciousness in the continuum of a person who hears the words “the impermanence of sound”, sound appears to serve only as the basis of its impermanence and not as the basis of other characteristics. This is a mistaken appearance, for sound is also the basis of other characteristics such as of sound’s existence, definition, and so forth. However, even though the conceptual consciousness is mistaken with regard to that appearance, it is a correct awareness in that it correctly apprehends its main object, the referent object of the words “the impermanence of sound”.

¹⁰ With regard to this appearance, the conceptual consciousness of the person hearing the words “the impermanence of sound” is not mistaken, for the impermanence of sound is based only on sound; it is not the impermanence of a table, a chair or any other produced phenomenon.

Therefore, since the statement presents sound – considered to be the statement's central referent object – as a *predicate* (of the impermanence) the statement “the impermanence of sound” is referred to as *words expressing a predicate*.

Similarly, the words “the number of vases” and “the conjunction of fingers” are *words expressing a predicate* because to the conceptual consciousness of the person hearing these words, the vases appear as the *predicate* of the number and the fingers appear as the *predicate* of the conjunction. This is because the words ‘the vases’ specify the base of the impermanence and ‘the fingers’ specify the base of the conjunction.

Demonstrating that [words] expressing a subject do not exclude other characteristics:

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

*Although they describe a single fact, they suggest
All [other predicates]; thus the [words,] “fingers are conjoined”
Are known as [words] expressing a subject.*

Regarding the subject, words expressing, “**fingers are conjoined**”, they are known as **expressing a subject**, for **although** among the fingers' many predicates, they [only] describe **a single fact** – [the fingers] being connected – they are words which **suggest** as an object of awareness **all** other predicates of the fingers, that is, they do not exclude [those predicates].

The second category of words expressing two referent objects that are of one nature are *words expressing a subject*. As an example, Dharmakirti cites the words “fingers are conjoined”. This statement expresses the fingers' state of being conjoined without grammatically linking it to the fingers with a genitive.

Like the words “the conjunction of the fingers”, the statement “fingers are conjoined” mentions only a single *predicate* or characteristic of the fingers (namely that they are conjoined). Yet owing to the way this characteristic is expressed, without a genitive, it is referred to as *words expressing a subject*. This is because the words present the fingers – the central referent object of the statement – as the *subject* or base of ‘being conjoined’, while the characteristic of ‘being conjoined’ appears as a *predicate* of the fingers.

Similarly, the words “sound is impermanent” are *words expressing a subject*, because they present sound – which is the statement's main referent object – as *subject* and ‘being impermanent’ as *predicate*.

According to Khedrup Je's explanation in his *Ornament of the Seven Commentaries, a Treatise on Pramana, Clearing the Darkness of the Mind*: for instance, when someone wants to know whether sound is permanent or impermanent, another person may state, “sound is impermanent”. To the conceptual consciousness of the first person hearing that statement, the referent object of those words is presented in such a way that sound appears to be the *subject* or basis of ‘being impermanent’, while ‘being impermanent’ appears as the *predicate* of sound.

Furthermore, *words expressing a subject* are described as *words that do not exclude other characteristics*. This is because the statement “fingers are conjoined” does not exclude other characteristics of the fingers, nor does it exclude the fact that other phenomena such as toes are conjoined.

Similarly, the words “sound is impermanent” do not exclude sound's other characteristics such as its existence, its being an object of an ear consciousness, and so forth. Likewise, they do not exclude the fact that other produced phenomena such as colors, smells, tables, etc. are impermanent.

The reason is that to the conceptual consciousness of a person hearing the words, 'being impermanent' does not appear to be the only characteristic of sound nor does 'being impermanent' appear to be based only on sound¹¹.

Please note that although words such as "the conjunction of fingers" are *words expressing a predicate*, they are *words expressing a subject* with regard to the conjunction. In fact, they are at the same time (1) *words expressing a predicate* with regard to the fingers and (2) *words expressing subject* with regard to the conjunction. This is because, as mentioned above, to the conceptual consciousness of the person hearing those words, the fingers appear as the *predicate* (of its conjunction), while the conjunction appears as the *subject* (of the fingers).

The same is true for other *words expressing a predicate* such as the words "the impermanence of sound"; they are (1) *words expressing a predicate* with regard to sound and (2) *words expressing a subject* with regard to impermanence, because to the conceptual consciousness of the person hearing those words, sound appears as the *predicate* (of its impermanence), while impermanence appears as the *subject* (of sound).

Similarly, *words expressing a subject* such as the words "fingers are conjoined" are (1) *words expressing a subject* with regard to the fingers and (2) *words expressing a predicate* with regard to being conjoined.

However, the scriptures distinguish between *words expressing a predicate with regard to a particular referent object* and *words expressing a predicate in general*. The same is true for *words expressing a subject*.

Whether certain words are in general *words expressing a predicate* or *words expressing a subject* is determined by their central referent object. The words "the conjunction of fingers" are in general *words expressing a predicate* because fingers are their central referent object and they are *words expressing a predicate* with regard to the fingers.

The same applies to all other *words expressing a predicate* as well as to *words expressing a subject*.

[Dharmakirti says in the *Pramanavarttika*:]

Thus [different] terms are employed. [101]

Thus, although the predicates [indicated by the two statements] are not of a separate nature [from their basis], there is a purpose for **employing different terms** for a single fact, because one does so to [bring forth] knowledge of that single fact by way of excluding or not excluding other [characteristics].

Dharmakirti summarizes this outline by saying that, although in the case of the two statements (a) "the conjunction of fingers" and (b) "fingers are conjoined", their referent objects are ontologically the same, they express the same central referent object (the fingers), and the referent objects of each statement are of one nature, there is a purpose for expressing these objects differently. The purpose for adding or omitting the genitive is to cause the above-mentioned different appearances of the central referent object and one of its characteristics to the conceptual consciousness of the person hearing the statements.

¹¹ Please note that although the conceptual consciousness hearing the words "sound is impermanent" does not exclude sound's other characteristics nor the fact that produced phenomena other than sound are impermanent, this does not mean that sound's other characteristics appear to that consciousness, nor that phenomena other than sound appear to the consciousness to be impermanent.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is the meaning of a *subject* and a *predicate* in the context of *words expressing a predicate* and *words expressing a subject*?
2. Why are the words “the impermanence of sound” called *words expressing a predicate*?
3. What are other examples of *words expressing a predicate*?
4. Why are the words “the impermanence of sound” called *words that exclude other characteristics*?
5. Why are the words “sound is impermanent” called *words expressing a subject*?
6. What are other examples of *words expressing a subject*?
7. Why are the words “sound is impermanent” called *words that do not exclude other characteristics*?
8. What is the purpose for adding or omitting the genitive in the case of *words expressing a predicate* and *words expressing a subject*?